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ABSTRACT

Videocassette recorder (VCR) acquisition and use in developing nations is largely an individual or household decision, and their rapid diffusion is influenced by several factors: price, and its variations due to government restrictions; income and income distribution; the content of broadcast television; the diversity of entertainment media available; and, for minority cultures, the degree to which audiences' languages and cultures are represented in the broadcast system. Because VCRs are an expensive acquisition, the marginal utility or informational-entertainment utility of purchases must be high for VCR purchase to take precedence over competing goods. This utility also seems related to systemic limits on information and entertainment, such as centralized broadcast structures that work against individual, ethnic, and regional variety in audience interests, or didactic propagandistic or educational system goals which frequently limit access to the entertainment content that audiences seem to desire. Also, increasing restrictions on trans-border program flow limits some kinds of individual, linguistic, and ethnic interests. (Fifty-three references are appended.) (MM)

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Adoption and Use of Videocassette Recorders in the Third World

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Adoption and Use of Videocassette Recorders

in the Third World

Videocassette recorders (VCRs) are undergoing an explosive growth or diffusion in a number of Third World countries, throughout Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and Latin America. At least two Arab nations, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, at 80-90 percent household penetration of VCRs, far surpass even the United Kingdom and the United States in the number of VCRs owned. In some Third World countries, such as the Arabian Gulf States, many people are wealthy enough that acquisition of VCRs is not surprising. When it is considered that a number of less wealthy countries also have high numbers of VCRs, it becomes clear that the reasons for VCR adoption are broader than purchasing power.

This chapter will explore two interacting levels of causation or explanation for Third World VCR diffusion. First are systemic reasons, such as government tariff policies which make VCRs more expensive, and broadcast policy and media structures which produce certain types of media content and limit others. Second are aggregated interests of individuals in controlling and diversifying their media consumption. Among the reasons for VCR diffusion that will be explored are the audiences' desire to add diversity to "television" viewing, particularly in entertainment; the desire to circumvent system/government controls on content; and the general desire for greater personal control over the variety of possible informational and entertainment viewing. Such viewer needs will be contrasted with VCR costs (largely determined by government tariff policy) against income or purchasing power to consider the marginal utility of VCRs to Third World viewers, who have other pressing needs to be met.

VCR Context: Electronic Media in the Third World

As the media most likely to reach remote and often illiterate mass audiences, first radio and then television have been invested with considerable hopes and fears in most Third World nations. There even more than in most industrialized countries, electronic media have been seen both as "magic multipliers" of educational/developmental information and as instruments of political mobilization and control.

Mass media in the Third World have often been overemphasized in development planning. Lerner (1958) emphasized the role of media in creating empathy and awareness of the outside world and breaking into and changing traditional ways. Rogers (1983) emphasized the media's ability to communicate innovations or new ideas essential to change. Others, such as Schramm (1964), Pool (1961). and Frey (1973), also emphasized the value of media in development.

However, beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a number of researchers began to criticize this "dominant paradigm." Beltran, Rogers himself and others (1976; 1978) criticized simple receiver-oriented diffusion paradigms and highlighted the need to look at the structure and context of diffused messages. In some contexts, development messages came to be seen as irrelevant or even counterproductive and anticipated effects shifted "from rising expectations to rising frustrations" (Rogers, 1978).

Western influence on Third World communication contexts came in for further criticism. Pasquali (1976) and Dorfman & Mattelart (1975) looked at the role of imported media structures and media content in maintaining capitalist systems, international relations of dependency, and "First World" ideological elements, such as consumerism, racism, and sex roles (Beltran, 1978) considered inappropriate for many Third World nations. Some in the U.S., such as Schiller (1969) and Wells (1972), began directly to criticize the U.S. role in exporting media products, advertising and, technology to Third World nations.

Nordenstreng & Varis (1973) documented the flow and criticized the role of imported media products, particularly television programs, while wire service news was examined by Boyd-Barrett (1980) and others.

Another wave of research looked at the influence of imported broadcasting models on the Third World, particularly the British (BBC public service license fee-based systems), the American (tending to commercial finance and a mix of libertarian and social responsibility ethics), and French (more state control and mixed government-commercial financing). Such studies were done by Tunstall (1976), Read (1977), Katz and Wedell (1977), and Lee (1980).

It was also clear that in many cases, models from abroad were modified substantially, as in the case of the American model in Brazil, for example (Mattos, 1984; Straubhaar, 1984). Other models were copied less extensively (USSR influence on Eastern Europe and some Third World nations; Nasserite "mobilization" systems in the Arab world, etc.). In all, a number of diverging systems appeared. Third World systems can now be found to fit all of the "four theories of the press" (Siebert, Schramm & Peterson, 1956) as well as the more recent "development journalism" model (McPhail, 1981; Rosenblum, 1979). Several of these Third World broadcasting tendencies are particularly significant for VCR diffusion. Those include the issues of centralized vs. individual control over content, education vs. entertainment in content, and national content promotion vs. desires for free flow of content across borders. Each of these issues has system/structure, policy. and audience demand aspects, which we will try to relate to VCR diffusion.

Why VCRs are Being Adopted at a Rapid Rate

The spread of VCRs is still a recent phenomenon, albeit an explosive and rapid one. Preliminary empirical research identifies several factors involved in VCR diffusion: price, variations in price due to government restrictions, income and income distribution, the content of broadcast television, the

diversity of entertainment media available, and, for minority cultures, the degree to which audiences' languages and cultures are represented in the broadcast system.

The first three variables are linked. If prices are low, broader and lower income groups are more likely to be able to purchase a VCR. This is increasingly the case, as VCR prices have continued to decline. Price reduction and available discretionary income are behind the explosive growth of VCRs and have made them a "mass medium" (in that large audiences see the same non-broadcast material using VCRs) in a number of countries. Where prices remain high, it is usually due to attempts by governments to discourage VCR acquisition by imposing tariffs or import barriers. Where national policy dictates that VCRs be locally manufactured, as in Brazil, prices increase as much as two or three hundred per cent. Such barriers are widely violated by smuggling, but barriers increase the price and restrict access to VCRs (Ganley & Ganley, 1986; Heeter, 1984). In several countries a significant proportion of VCRs are smuggled (Ganley and Ganley, 1986). In Brazil, roughly two-thirds of existing VCRs are estimated to have been brought in from outside, primarily by smugglers (Veja, 1986). Even where VCRs are manufactured, as in Brazil, local supplies may not meet demand.

Even when prices have not been artificially increased by tariffs or barriers, the marginal cost of a VCR is still very high for an individual, family, or even a village in most Third World countries. That is, a much larger proportion of income will be required to buy a VCR than in nations with higher per capita incomes. Therefore, the marginal utility of the VCR must also be correspondingly higher. The prospective VCR owner in most Third World areas has little discretionary income and therefore the machine must offer something sufficient to make it prized above competing goods, like washing machines, refrigerators, vehicles, etc. One of the most impressive aspects of

the VCR boom is that the video machines do surpass these alternatives for many. For that to happen, the VCR must be in a position to add greatly to the gratification, status, or quality of life of the viewer.

According to correlational studies carried out by Heeter (1984) and Straubhaar & Lin (1986), (see Chapter ___ in this Volume) one of the variables most significantly associated with world-wide VCR penetration, is the diversity of what is available on broadcast or cable television. Both the number of channels, per se, and more content-oriented measures of diversity tend to be negatively correlated with VCR penetration in poorer Third World countries where VCRs are primarily used for playing non-broadcast materials to add diversity to television viewing.

In the Third World, as well as in industrialized nations, VCR penetration must be put into the larger perspective of video media competition (Noam, 1985; Lhoest, 1983). In some wealthier countries, such as the U.S. or Britain, or in a few of the more media-rich developing countries, VCRs seem to be used primarily for time-shifting. In wealthier countries, VCR penetration is positively correlated with measures of broadcast diversity, number of TV channels, and cable-TV availability (Straubhaar & Lin, 1986). However, in most Third World countries, VCRs are diffused most rapidly where television viewers feel they are not well served by what is broadcast, in short, where the "marginal utility" of VCRs for adding diversity is high. In poorer countries, VCR use is negatively correlated with measures of TV diversity (Straubhaar & Lin, 1986). The explanation seems to be that in those countries where resources must be more carefully guarded, the marginal utility of VCRs is lower, given a more adequate diversity of content available on broadcast television. (See Chapter _____ in this volume.)

In either case, VCRs offer greater personal control over what is watched. VCRs enable owners to personalize their video viewing and better meet their own

perceived needs or interests. To some degree, this is simply a Third World manifestation of what has long been predicted in communication research, a more active audience which seeks to gratify its own needs with selective media exposure (Rosengren, Wenner, & Palmgreen, 1985).

Personalization or individuation of video consumption via VCRs enables wider variety or diversity among the programs which an individual, family, or larger group may choose to watch. Still, some patterns do emerge. Above all, VCRs seem to be predominantly used to add entertainment material where relatively little entertainment is available on broadcast television or where certain kinds of entertainment are not broadcast. In analyzing why audiences seek entertainment Atkin (1985) noted that there are both positive drives for content that is enjoyable and negative selection to avoid or compensate for tension/relaxation, boredom/killing time, loneliness/companionship, and escape from problems.

This research-based profile of VCR diffusion patterns matches up relatively well with the pattern and context of Third World media use. Some major relationships between VCR diffusion and media patterns deserve further discussion, however.

Centralization, Broadcasting and, VCRs

At least until recently, in most approaches developmental use of the electronic mass media was seen as properly or perhaps inevitably centralized. Ambitious experiments, such as India's Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE), tended to rely on centralized production and distribution of messages (Mody, 1979). Although evaluations showed that one of the more successful parts of the overall SITE project was a regional production and broadcast operation in Kheda, that part was also the most politically and bureaucratically problematic, and has, in fact, been aborted (Chiruvolu, 1986). The great political advantage of SITE was, it seems, the opportunity offered to

national leaders to communicate more directly with remote parts of the country not previously reached by mass communication.

As with the Kheda project, newer theoretical research and field work carried out in development communication shows that decentralized media have greater effectiveness in reaching and holding the audience (Chiruvolu, 1986). Other work with community radio stations in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa indicates that Third World audiences react very favorably to media that offer the possibility of greater local feedback or interaction (White, 1976; Jamison & McAnany, 1978). Nevertheless, the temptation for Third World leaders to centralize and control broadcasting is very strong. A recent overview by Head (1985) placed most Third World systems in the general category of "authoritarian" (taken from Siebert, Schramm, and Peterson's four theories of the press, 1956) or simply government-dominated. Few national systems exhibit the kind of "totalitarian" control exercised by the USSR, but relatively few are willing to entrust the media themselves with final responsibility for content as the "libertarian" or "social responsibility" models might prescribe.

The detailed study of Third World broadcasting conducted by Katz and Wedell (1976) indicates that despite an initial tendency to copy U.S., British, or French broadcast models, modifications had been widespread, particularly in the area of political control. In particular, they noted that the British ideal of BBC-style independent corporations had not fared well in the often unstable politics of many former British colonies. Even such relatively democratic states as Nigeria and India had moved broadcasting either into government ministries or under much closer control. Similarly, Latin American countries which had used the U.S. model of private commercial systems often showed far more assertion of government control over content, both reactively in terms of censorship and proactively in terms of guiding content (Alisky, 1983).

One of the effects VCRs may have is to challenge the prevailing system of government controls on television. (Audio cassette recorders are doing much the same thing in radio broadcasting.) VCRs circumvent both development use and political control of television by bringing de facto media decentralization. They put the control of programming in the hands of the audience. What VCR owners choose to watch (and what is most available to them) seems likely to circumvent and frustrate both development programs' intentions to educate them and leaders' desires to control the information content available to them.

VCRs and Broadcast Content Diversity

Centralized broadcasting systems seem to create structural conditions that lead to a desire for greater individual control via VCRs or other means. A related issue is the direction or control of content inherent in mass media, but more explicit and clear in many Third World countries. In most Third World states outside of Latin America, broadcast media systems were created with goals consistent with the British public service concept, the French notion of cultural nationalism and political control, the "development journalism" concept of cooperation with development programs, or Soviet- or Chinese-style total involvement with government programs. All of these goals exclude certain kinds of content that viewers might desire. In particular, few of these systems and patterns of media goals include strong emphasis on entertainment.

Since VCRs provide a wider variety of programs which an individual, family, or larger group may choose to watch it is not surprising that they are popular in societies that traditionally control broadcasting. In Indonesia and Malaysia, for example, "the public seeks video because of the limited fare of the state television service" (Lent, 1985). VCRs seem to be used to add entertainment material where relatively little is available on broadcast

television or where certain kinds of entertainment are not broadcast (Straubhaar & Lin, 1986).

In places such as Saudi Arabia, where television has been highly didactic, stressing religion, education, cultural improvement, or political persuasion, almost any type of entertainment programming is snapped up for VCR consumption. What tends to be most readily adopted are feature films, followed by television series taped off-air (Boyd, 1985; Lent, 1985; Ogan, 1985; Straubhaar, 1986). Most often these are from the U.S., followed by Europe, then local or regional productions (cf. Varis, 1984).

Even in more entertainment-oriented broadcast systems, specific kinds of entertainment are frequently downplayed or prohibited. Perhaps the most visible and controversial example is pornography. Pornography, or even less explicit sexual content, is particularly worrisome to authorities in Islamic countries such as those in Asia and the Arab world (Boyd, 1985; Lent, 1985). Various case studies show that pornography frequently dominates VCR viewing, particularly while it is still a new phenomenon in a given country or area. Even so, the novelty effect tends to wear off and the frequency of pornography viewing often declines (Intermedia, 1983), particularly if there is evidence that children are watching when parents are not at home.

Another controversial type of programming is news or political information on videotape. A study by Ganley and Ganley (1986) focuses on the potential of VCRs for allowing politically challenging or subversive material to bypass national censorship and counter national points of view or propaganda. They find the political potential of VCRs to be considerable. The main case to date is the Ayatollah Khomeini's use of audio cassettes to spread opposition to the Shah of Iran and create support for his Islamic revolution. The Philippine opposition movement, led by Corazon Aquino, also used videotapes of foreign coverage of her husband's assassination to accentuate indignation about the

slaying and opposition to Ferdinand Marcos (Lent, 1985). Marcos' supporters later disseminated from his exile in Hawaii a video tape showing him "physically fit" in connection with an apparent coup attempt.

Other less controversial genres of material are also sometimes limited by broadcast policy. A number of countries limit showings of some "Rambo"-type American adventure films and series which are considered too violent, but which remain popular with sizeable parts of the audience. Indian movies are similarly popular but proscribed in Pakistan because of conflict between the two nations and, in some cases, because of sexual content (Lent, 1985).

VCRs also play a visible role in supplying programs wanted by minority audiences, e.g., interest groups, such as martial artists or bird watchers, who want specialized material. Perhaps more significantly in the Third World, VCRs can help ethnic or linguistic minorities find material in their languages, catering to their cultures. For example, the Chinese community in several Southeast Asian nations is not directly served by broadcast television, which as a matter of national policy tends to emphasize the dominant language of the nation. In Malaysia, for example, the broadcast authorities acknowledge that they are losing the Chinese audience but are reluctant to modify their language policy and goals (Lent, 1985). English-speaking travelers are often catered to in hotels by in-house cable systems fed by VCRs with videotapes flown in from the U.S. or U.K., while a number of ethnic groups in the U.S. and U.K. use VCRs to watch television programs and recent movies from home (DoBrow, 1986).

Film/TV Program Flow and VCRs

A great deal of controversy in international debate has centered on the flow of films, recorded music, news agency reports, television programs, and other cultural products from country to country. In many cases, the impact of imported media on national/regional/local culture has been shown to be at least somewhat worrisome (Boyd, 1985; Beltran, 1978; Straubhaar, 1984). One of the

goals of broadcast policy in a number of countries has been to limit the inflow of foreign culture on film, music, and video, and to promote national production instead (McBride Report, 1980). Even in Great Britain and Canada, imported material is limited to a certain proportion of broadcast time. However, as with the examples above, this may pit government policy against the interests of individual viewers, who might prefer to watch imported material.

This conflict is accentuated as VCRs give individuals or ethnic minorities the ability selectively to import television programs, music videos, or films from other countries. As noted above, the importation of Chinese films into Malaysia and Indian films into Pakistan has already reached sufficiently significant levels to concern authorities there (Lent, 1985). Similar regional video flow is likely to increase, from countries such as Egypt to more conservative Arabic-speaking nations (Boyd, 1985).

Of most concern, however, is the likelihood that VCRs will add to the already pronounced flow of Anglo-American film, television, and music video material in English to Third World countries. Surveys of video rental shops by the authors in several countries in Latin America and the Middle East show that American movies (and television shows in the Middle East) dominate much of what is available for rent or exchange in shops or clubs. Several reasons for this phenomenon fit into the pattern of VCR diffusion. First, from the early days of cinema, American movies have tended to set a pattern for what is considered entertaining in many countries (Guback & Varis, 1984; Read, 1976; Tunstall, 1976). Second, relatedly, the stock of available films for either legal or pirated distribution via the VCR is highly dominated by American products, following years of avid U.S. exportation. Thus, when individuals look for entertainment to supplement viewing, the main option they may find, because of existing film and television distribution patterns, are American films and series recorded off air. Third, the fact that many Third World countries are

trying actively to reduce American and other media imports may repress an existing demand that has built up over the years.

VCRs and Third World Government Economic Measures

A last major area of Third World development policies related to VCR diffusion is government policy that affects prices of imports. Except in South Korea and more recently Brazil and India, VCRs are imported in the Third World. As Table One shows, as of 1984, VCR prices in a number of countries averaged about $400. That seems to have been the natural market price, except where extremely difficult trade conditions or government import policies raised prices.

Some governments deliberately set high taxes or tariffs on VCRs to restrict their importation. Means and motives are varied but they center on economic and political policies.

A number of governments, including non-Third World nations, such as the USSR and France, have tried to restrict VCR imports out of fear of the kinds of cultural and political effects mentioned above. However, flat prohibitions or restricted quotas have not worked very well in restricting VCRs. In many countries, VCRs are smuggled in in massive quantities (Ganley & Ganley, 1986). Such measures do raise prices, though, since the smuggled goods are usually more expensive. In some countries, such as India, governments have eventually stopped trying to keep VCRs out for political or cultural reasons and have moved to economic concerns about reducing imports.

Some countries, such as Brazil, India, and Egypt, want to create domestic VCR-producing industries in order to reduce imports. This follows from a general tendency, particularly among the larger Third World nations, to follow a policy of import substitution industrialization. This economics-based policy largely does not object to the consumption of goods per se. Rather, the objective is to avoid foreign exchange problems, create employment, and develop

industry/technology bases in their own countries by substituting nationally manufactured goods for imports. In any case, this type of policy tends to raise prices. Cheaper imports are either blocked or heavily taxed, while locally manufactured goods, protected by such policies, tend to be more expensive.

For many smaller countries, the idea of producing or even assembling VCRs from "kits" of imported parts may not be feasible. Still, many of these countries see VCRs as a luxury consumer item and tax them accordingly. This policy also raises prices.

Running against either import-substitution or tariff policies on VCRs is the overwhelming demand for them in a number of countries. Still, as we have seen, demand for VCRs is not inflexible and depends largely on how satisfied audiences are with other media. If demand is not, in fact, extremely strong, then restrictions which raise prices can have the effect of reducing VCR diffusion considerably. In Brazil, for example, despite a higher GNP per capita than Colombia, VCR penetration is much lower (Table One). This is partially due to greater diversity and "quality" of what is available on broadcast television, according to interviews by one of the authors (Straubhaar, in Brazil, 1986). However, to give economic factors their due, it seems that a revived economy in Brazil is leading to a greatly increase purchase of VCRs in 1986, not so much to substitute for broadcasting as to let owners create new content with cameras or meet special interests in sports, health, or art films which are not released in the country (Veja, December 24, 1986).

This review of literature shows several phenomena, largely related to Third World media structures and media or economic policies, that create the conditions which in some cases lead to rapid adoption and use of VCRs. What has been written matches up reasonably well with the quantitative studies of

VCR acquisition and diffusion that have been done to date. (See Straubhaar & Lin, 1986; Chapter _____ in this Volume.)

VCR Ownership and Viewing Patterns

There are a variety of reasons why VCRs are popular in Third World countries. Although VCR ownership/access information is problematic, it is clear that VCRs are not spreading evenly in all countries or income groups.

Information about ownership of or access to VCRs is still incomplete. Governments are inefficient in collecting import and sales data. Even manufacturers' sales data are often misleading. Part of the problem is the widespread purchase of smuggled or black market VCRs. Ganley and Ganley (1986) reported both the importance of the black market to many economies and the particularly extensive sales of VCRs on the black market in countries as diverse as Burma, the People's Republic of China, Mexico, Nigeria, and the USSR. If, for example, manufacturers' sales figures were accurate for Panama, a major smuggling point, almost all residents there would have a VCR (Ganley & Ganley, 1986). In the Arabian Gulf as much as 50% of imported machines are taken home by expatriate workers or smuggled by sea or land to other countries.

In some countries, market surveys have estimated VCR ownership on the basis of samples. In most other Third World countries, expert estimates are probably more accurate than official government or sales data.

VCR Penetration

Table One gives VCR penetration levels, as of 1984, the last year for which broadly comparable data were available. Newer data were used when available. Since VCR penetration seems to be inversely related to the number of television channels available and to the price of VCRs, these data are also supplied for comparison.

Mechanisms of VCR Diffusion--Software Sales

Given the demand, a number of new businesses have started to supply video tapes to very diverse audiences. Most tapes--75-80 percent in many countries (Variety, various)--are pirated (i.e., copied illegally without compensation to copyright holders).

Table One: VCR Penetration in 1984

Country	VCR Percentage of TV Houses(1)	Total(2)	No. TV Channels	Av. VCR Price
Algeria	*	*	1	-
Argentina	5##	1##	4	$850
Bahrain	79##	-	2	400
Bangladesh	1	*	1	1,000
Barbados	2	*	1	-
Brazil	11##	2##	5	1,000
Cameroon	-	*	0	2,300
Chile	4	1	5	800
China (PRC)	*	*	1	1,900
Colombia	25	2	2	1,950
Dominican Rep.	-	*	5	800
El Salvador	2	*	5	500
Egypt	4##	*	2	2,500
Ethiopia	8	*	1	1,100
Fiji	-	6	0	450
Ghana	8	*	1	700
Honduras	3	*	2	500
Hong Kong	27	8	4	400
India	29	*	1	800
Indonesia	6	*	1	-
Iran	13	1	1	-
Iraq	24	1	1	-
Israel	56	9	2	-
Jamaica	8	1	1	2,450
Jordan	30##	3##	2	2,100
Kenya	10	2	1	1,500
Kuwait	88##	55##	2	350
Lebanon	14	1	2	450
Liberia	5	*	1	1,000
Libya	84#	6#	2	-
Malaysia	30	3	3	400
Mali	*	*	0	-
Mexico	5	1	4	550
Nigeria	2	*	1/2	1,000
Oman	75	55	1	400
Pakistan	15	*	1	-
Panama	10	1	5	400
Peru	11	1	5	-
Philippines	14	1	3	400
Qatar	77##	25##	1	400

Country	VCR Percentage of TV Houses(1)	Total(2)	No. TV Channels	Av. VCR Price
Saudi Arabia	75	-	2	400
Singapore	25	14	1	400
South Africa	20	2	1	-
South Korea	7#	1#	4	400
Sri Lanka	5	*	2	
Sudan	*	*	2	2,000
Syria	10##	1	1	-
Tanzania	*	*	0	2,000
Taiwan	19	8	3	700
Thailand	9	*	4	-
Trinidad	47	9	1	500
United Arab E.	80	7	2	400
Uruguay	-	-	4	1,000
Venezuela	14	2	3	500
Yemen (North)	25##	3	1	650
Zaire	50+	1	2	1,000
Zambia	*	*	1	-

(1) This column shows the proportion of households with TV and VCRs.
(2) This column shows the proportion of VCRs to the total population of the country.
* Indicates less than one-half of one percent.
# These data are from 1983.
These data are from 1986. (All others are from 1984.)

Therefore, copying and sale of these tapes has become an underground cottage industry in the Third World. Even countries like the USSR or France have been unable to stop illegal importation of VCRs, much less tapes of undesirable or illegally pirated material, which can be easily carried in a coat pocket (Lhoest, 1983; Smale, 1983). Even the most authoritarian or totalitarian developing-country governments have not been successful in controlling programs deemed contrary to national interests.

Most VCR software piracy is cross-border, typically involving bringing entertainment programming in from other countries (Intermedia, 1983; Ganley & Ganley, 1986). The Motion Picture Export Association of America estimated in 1985 that its members had lost $700,000,000 in potential theatrical ticket receipts because potential viewers in a number of countries watched U.S. movies on videotape instead of in movie houses. In just one country, Venezuela, where VCR penetration of households is 18-20%, losses by MPEAA distributors were

estimated at $20,000,000 in 1981 alone ('Legal' homevid in Latino orbit, 1985). Depending on price, availability. and controls over what films are theatrically released, the option to see pirated films is a significant incentive to VCR adoption.

However, there are several Third World countries which have major film or television industries which produce video entertainment. In those countries, piracy via VCRs can be threatening to national film industries. In India and Egypt, for example, VCRs are a serious challenge to the national film industry. "Video parlors" show pirated films at cheaper prices than movie houses. The Indian parlors frequently show films before they are released in rural or suburban areas (Ninan & Singh, 1983).

Mechanisms of VCR Diffusion--Alternative Content

In some countries, significant use of VCRs is being made to create and view alternative material, i.e., material not previously shown in film or broadcast form. In some cases, as in Brazil, this tends to be programs on sports, how-to information, and custom-made programs about families, childbirths, and weddings (Veja, 1986). This seems to be spawning a second wave of VCR adoption, at least in Brazil. There, VCR adoption remained limited when the primary use was only for rental of pirated films, but it has grown enormously in the last year as other uses have been publicized (Veja, 1986).

In Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America, where most broadcasting is already entertainment-oriented, VCRs are also being used by community groups, unions, and political parties; in Central America, they are utilized by guerilla groups to spread alternative political and social messages. The extent of such use is difficult to gauge, hence its significance in VCR adoption is somewhat unclear, except that it creates a completely new set of uses for the equipment, with a substantially new set of users (Karen Rannucci, personal communication, Philadelphia, October, 1986).

Conclusion

This chapter has examined VCR diffusion in the Third World. There, as elsewhere, VCR acquisition and use is largely an individual or household decision, although some are acquired through village or communal decisions or government programs. VCR diffusion then represents, as with the classic diffusion of innovations, a series of "individual" adoptions (Rogers, 1983). However, as the general critique of diffusion research has shown, there are a series of structural and systemic factors which condition and influence these decisions (Rogers, et al, 1976).

Even at world market prices (around $400 in 1984), VCRs are an expensive acquisition for any but Third World elites. Furthermore, in many countries, government tariff policies make VCRs even more expensive. The marginal utility or informational-entertainment utility of purchases must therefore be high for VCR purchase to take precedence over other competing goods. This utility also seems related to systemic limits on information and entertainment, although there may be more individual factors which have not yet emerged in research.

There are a series of interacting systemic reasons why individuals in many Third World countries might feel a need to supplement existing broadcast or film fare. Centralized broadcast structures work against individual, ethnic, and regional variety in audience interests. Didactic propagandistic or educational system goals frequently limit access to content, particularly entertainment, that audiences may desire. In particular, increasing restrictions on trans-border program flow limits some kinds of individual, linguistic, and ethnic interests.

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